



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

VOL. XI.

JANUARY, 1901.

No. 2.

THE MONIST

PROPHEtic DREAMS IN GREEK AND ROMAN ANTIQUITY.¹

I.

IF there is a province of psychic life where for ages, even among men of science, naught but crude beliefs and accredited legends have held supreme sway, it is assuredly the province of dreams. From time immemorial philosopher and peasant alike have analysed this state of consciousness, and their conceptions as a rule have differed only in their personal manner of expressing their impressions and beliefs. And in all discussions, and upon all lips that pronounce with apprehension the word *dreams*, in default of scientific experiments and precise data, which are misinterpreted even where they do exist, nothing, as a rule, is adduced but a legendary past rich in oneirological dogmas and observations which are appealed to with a confidence and certitude that are astounding.

The problem of prophetic dreams particularly has occupied our attention, and one of us, M. Vaschide, has for several years past also been studying the psychic life of dreams generally, having instituted to this end delicate and thorough researches, of which he has published hitherto but a few epitomised results.²

¹ Translated from the French MS. of MM. N. Vaschide and H. Piéron by Thomas J. McCormack.

² N. Vaschide, *Recherches expérimentales sur les rêves. De la continuité des rêves pendant le sommeil. Comptes rendus de l'Academie des Sciences, 17 Juillet, 1899.*

In the following paper we purpose giving a complete critical exposition of the views which obtained in Greek and Roman antiquity regarding the prophetic value of dreams. We have pursued this historical study throughout the history of both thinking and believing humanity, and its value is not diminished by the fact that in works treating of dreams the citations from the ancient sources are nearly always garbled or mechanically reproduce the obscure conjectures of authors who have never consulted the original texts. Having reverted to the sources themselves, we believe these pages will fill many gaps in the psychological study of dreams, and at the same time will facilitate the acquisition of a correct point of view in a domain where the imagination even of critics has distorted and falsified citations and facts that have no importance but unfortunately have passed from author to author as precious and categorical documents. The utility of our historical researches is further augmented by the fact that in our day the precise nature of the documents that have been left us on this subject by antiquity is no longer known, and that authors but too frequently base upon this supposititious literature their proofs for the establishment of hypotheses which more nearly resemble poetry than science.

Greek and Roman antiquity presents a very extensive and very rich field for studying the belief in the prophetic value of dreams. We find here a vast amount of material on the subject, as well in mythology and literature as in history and philosophy. And with mythology must not be forgotten oneiromancy, which is intimately related to it, and upon which M. Bouché Leclercq gave us some twenty years ago accurate and valuable information in his work on the history of divination.¹

II.

In the Homeric mythology, dreams are phantoms, or *εἴδωλα*, to which the gods give all kinds of forms, and which represent either divine beings or dead ancestors. Sometimes even, the gods and the dead persons themselves appear in the dreams.

¹ Bouché Leclercq. *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*. Paris. Lefroux. 1879. II. Chap. I., 280-329.

Hesiod makes dreams the daughters of Night and the brothers of Sleep.¹ In Euripides, dreams are the children of Gæa, the Earth, the common mother of all beings; they are the genii with black wings who travel only during the night; by them Gæa conveys to mortals the revelations which they had formerly heard from her lips at Delphi before Apollo dispossessed her of her place; and she thus avenges herself upon her despoiler.² The Pythagoreans regarded them as the sons of Night and the messengers of the Moon.³ For Ovid, they were the sons of Sleep, and inhabited the palace of their father; they were called Morpheus, Thelos, and Phantasos according as they were capable of taking all human, animal, or material forms.⁴ At all events, tradition generally agrees in making Zeus the god of dreams since Homer;⁵ but Hermes succeeded him and added to his numerous other titles that of the "guide of dreams."⁶ Bouché Leclercq assumes that this power was likewise given to Pan, Ino, Asklepios, and Heracles, which appears to be proved for the latter by the passage "*ex voto Herculi Somniali.*"⁷

All dreams are not regarded as having the same standing; there are some which are due to natural influences; the true dreams are those of the morning and of the third watch,⁸ "because food disturbs dreams."⁹ There are also several precautions indicated, such as not sleeping upon one's back or upon one's right side, for fear of compressing the viscera.¹⁰ There is even a version given by Plutarch of the origin of the Pythagorean prohibition to eat beans, because of their pernicious influence upon dreams, which

¹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 211.

² Euripides, *Hecuba*, 70 et seq.; *Iphig. Taur.*, 1264 et seq.

³ Plutarch, *De sera numinis vindicta*, 22.

⁴ Ovid, *Metamorph.*, XI., 633 et seq.

⁵ *Iliad.*, I., 63.

⁶ ὄνειροπομπός. Athenæus, *Deipnosophistæ*, I., 16, 6.

⁷ Orelli, 1552-2405.

⁸ *Odyssey*, IV., 841.

⁹ Appuleius, *Metamorphoses*, I., 18.

¹⁰ Tertullian, *De anima*, 48.

they disturbed.¹ Other disturbing atmospheric influences were likewise feared.² As a charm against all such baneful factors, protective amulets were used; people also repaired to temples or tombs and invoked there the souls of the dead, as Bouché Leclercq has related at length.

As for the so-called temples of incubation, it may be in place to remark here that the legend according to which the magistrates of Sparta repaired to the temple of Pasiphaë at Thalamiae³ in order that the oracle might reveal to them in dreams suitable laws for their country, doubtless rested upon the following passage from Plutarch: "About that time one of the *ephori* had a surprising dream as he slept in the temple of Pasiphaë. He thought that, in the court where the *ephori* used to sit for the despatch of business, four chairs were taken away, and only one left. . . ."⁴

It is to be observed that by these methods the subjects provoked their dreams and put themselves into a state adapted to rendering them religious; so that these dreams were, so to speak, nothing but the reproductions of mythological conceptions. Still, despite the fact that prophecy by dreams received an elaborate symbolism, which reached a considerable development even in the *Odyssey*, and which it remains for us to interpret, the Greeks early acknowledged that all predictions were not realised, and hence arose the celebrated Homeric distinction between dreams: "Twain are the gates of shadowy dreams; the one is fashioned of horn and one of ivory; such as pass through the portals of sawn ivory are deceitful and bear tidings that are unfulfilled. But the dreams that come through the gates of polished horn bring a true issue whosoever of mortals beholds them."⁵

¹ *The Elder Pliny*, XVIII., 12. *Ed. Didot*, 30, 2.

² Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.*, VII., 10.

³ Plutarch, *Life of Agis*, IX.

⁴ Plutarch, *Life of Cleomenes*. Trans. by Langhorne. New York: Harpers. 1875. Vol. IV., p. 9.

⁵ . . . ήτοι μὲν δνειροὶ ἀμύχανοι, ἀκριτόμυθοι
γίγνονται, οὐδέτι πάντα τελείεται ἀνθρώποισιν.
δουλὶ γὰρ τε πίλαι ἀμενηρῶν εἰσὶν δνεῖρων·
αἱ μὲν γὰρ κεράεσσι τετεύχαται, αἱ δὲ ἐλέφαντι.

There has been considerable discussion regarding the meaning of this passage. It has been interpreted as referring to the cornea (the horn) of the eye, which sees with certitude, and to the ivory of the teeth through which pass deceptive words. Again, the horn has been made the attribute of Morpheus, the symbol of obscure but genuine simplicity; and the ivory has been regarded as the symbol of glittering but deceitful promises. Mme. Dacier has also proposed an interpretation of this metaphor; she writes: "By the horn, which is translucent, Homer understood the atmosphere or the heavens, which are translucent; and by the ivory, which is solid and opaque, he had reference to the earth."¹ M. Élie Reclus would take the gate of ivory, which is remarkable for its whiteness, to be the symbol of day, of the reappearance of the vulgar impressions of our waking hours; and the darkish horn to be the sign of night, the time when the gods send prophetic dreams as their messengers.² But apparently the simplest interpretation is etymological; it connects ἐλέφας with ἐλεφαίρεσθαι, which means "to deceive," and κέρας with κραίνειν, which means "to realise." As to Virgil, he did nothing more than translate the verses of Homer relating to the value of dreams, which make their veracity depend upon the gate of departure which they have chosen. "There are two gates of Sleep; the one is made of horn, and affords an easy exit for genuine phantoms; the other is wrought of white, shining ivory, but through this gate the Manes send deceptive dreams."³

τὸν οὖ μὲν κ' ἔλθωσι διὰ πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος,
οἵ δέ ἐλεφαίρονται, ἐπεὶ ἀκράντα φέροντες·
οἱ δὲ διὰ ξεστῶν κεράνων ἔλθωσι θύραζε,
οἵ δέ ἐτυμα κραίνονται, βροτῶν δέ κέντης ἴδηται.

—*Odysssey*, XIX, 559–568.

¹ Noël, *Dictionnaire de la fable*. Ed. Le Normant. 1803. Art. "Songe," p. 579.

² Élie Reclus. *Les rêves et le songe prophétique. L'humanité nouvelle*, April, 1900. Schleicher. Paris.

³ "Sunt geminæ Somni portæ: quarum altera fertur
Cornea, quâ veris facilis datur exitus umbris:
Altera, candenti perfecta nitens elephanto:
Sed falsa ad cœlum mittunt insomnia Manes."

Aeneid, Book VI., verses 894–898.

Mythology shows us the conception of the prophetic dream losing itself in the most remote epochs of the past, when legends and popular myths were formed. It shows us at the same time that the dream is required to predict the future in part at least, and on the other hand, that there was never found in it as certain a prediction as could have been desired. From this sprang all the various methods for eliminating false dreams, for guarding against error, for inducing dreams, and for determining which might be conceived as answers to the questions put.

III.

The classical distinction of *εντυμα*, mere dreams, and *ονειροι*, or dreams having a prophetic significance, was not established until a late period. Plutarch mentions it.¹ At this period, mythology was merged with, or rather was displaced by, oneiromancy, which sought to interpret and explain the prophetic significance of dreams. Among dreams of the second category in the new terminology are to be included dreams of direct and distinct prevision and the enigmatical symbols which the soothsayers make it their business to interpret.

The symbolism of dreams varies considerably; frequently it is derived from associations which are utterly incomprehensible to-day. Generally it oscillates between two extremes,—direct analogy and direct opposition, as Tylor has shown. For example, to dream of playing on the clavichord presages the death of relatives; to dream of having a rib removed from one's side is naturally a sign that one shall mourn before long the death of one's wife. The rules are either peculiar to certain regions, or they are general in their significance and pretty much the same all over the world.²

There has never been an established criterion for distinguishing common dreams from prophetic dreams, and the latter have always been interpreted rather at random. If the predictions were

¹ Plutarch, *De placitis philosophorum*, V. 2.

² Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Vol. I., pp. 121 et seq.; following Artemidorus, Cockayne (*Leechdoms, etc. of Early England*, Vol. III.), Seafield (*Literature, etc. of Dreams*), Halliwell (*Popular Rhymes etc.*, p. 217 et seq.).

not realised, it was the fault of the diviner, not the fault of the prophetic dream, which in itself always presages correctly; and gradually it became customary to give dreams a double interpretation, so as to exclude the possibility of error. "The certitude of dreams would be absolute and quite beyond the pale of doubt if their interpreters were not deceived in formulating their conjectures."¹

The symbolism may be also entirely conventional and adapted to the occasion. The dreamer, for example, may agree in advance that if he dreams of his right hand moving he will recover from his illness, and if he dreams of his left hand he will not recover; and since most frequently he is likely to dream of both, the issue, whatever it happens to be, will have been always foreseen. This symbolism of interpretation speedily lapses into childishness; for example, if an individual who is seventy years of age dreams that he will live fifty years more, he is permitted by the symbolism to reckon on thirteen years only, because the letter ν which denotes 50 occupies the thirteenth place in the Greek alphabet.²

These methods are common, in fact, to all the sciences of divination. Whether the task be that of interpreting the flight of birds, or the entrails of victims, or the omens furnished by animals, or springs, or what not, the diviners always endeavor to give ambiguous formulæ, the symbolism of which can be readily turned and made applicable to events which are quite opposite in character.

A place apart is to be accorded to medical divination by dreams, which is admirably expounded in the work of Kurt Sprengel,³ which furnishes accurate details from ancient authors treating of the complicated ceremonies of the temple of Æsculapius and the mode of summoning the gods. Baths and fumigations preceded the consultation of the oracle⁴ and were intended to induce in some measure

¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXI. 102.

² Artemidorus, *Oneirocriticon*, II., 75. Ed. Hercher, Leipsic, 1864.

³ Sprengel, *Histoire pragmatique de la médecine*. French translation by Jourdan, 1815. Vol. I., Section 2, Chapter V., pp. 140–175. (*Sur l'exercice de la médecine dans les temples grecs.*)

⁴ Pausanias, L. VII. Ch. I., p. 34.

favorable physiological and psychological conditions for the suggestion of dreams. The subject then lay down either between the arms of the goddess¹ or upon the skin of a ram previously sacrificed. "These preparations having been made," says Pausanias, "they sacrifice a ram, and after having stretched its skin on the ground they go to sleep on it and wait for the oneirological revelation." The divine apparitions assume, of course, different shapes, such as that of a viper, a dove, etc.; in fact, every apparition, whatever it may be, represents a god. As to the remedies prescribed, which in the majority of cases were doubtless suggested during sleep by the attending priests, they were usually quite innocuous, being in the main gentle purgatives or foods easily digested. On the other hand, the advice sometimes given was so utterly absurd that only a madman could have thought of following it; for example, the letting of one hundred pounds of blood. (Pausanias, *Attica*, I., 34-35.)

When a patient succumbs, his death is naturally attributed to some violation of the directions given.² The custodians of the temple, *νεωκόροι*, acted as interpreters, or *ἰκέται*, and sometimes dreamed themselves in place of the patient. Then there were the *δνειροπόλοι*.³

The same is true of the oracle of Pluto and Persephone in the grotto of Charon.⁴ In this last case there was no necessity even for methods of suggesting certain dreams. The priest suggested them to himself or invented what he wished, thus making himself a member of that class of soothsayers who could not meet one another on the street without bursting out laughing.

There existed in antiquity a considerable number of works on oneirology, which demonstrates its importance. Unfortunately, the majority of these records have been lost.⁵ Yet there have

¹ Pausanias, X. 32, p. 270.

² For a list of the instructions, see Aristides, *Sacred Discourses*, Part I., 413, 491, 501, 510; Part II., 515, 520, 531.

³ Pausanias, L. II., Ch. II., p. 219; Ch. XVII., p. 279; L. X., Ch. XXXII p. 270.

⁴ Strabo, L. XIV., p. 791.

⁵ Epicharmus: Tertullianus, *De anima*, 46; Lorenz, *Leben des Epicharmus*, p. 289.—Panyasis Halicarnassius: Artemidorus, I., 2, 64; II., 35; Suidas, *Πανίσας*.

been a few books of this order preserved, besides the valuable work of Artemidorus, and these, together with a few learned treatises by moderns, afford us pretty adequate information.¹ We shall not speak of the work of Artemidorus at length here; it is simply a manual for the use of oneirocritical diviners, a sort of *Key to Dreams*, of the same type as those published to-day. We shall merely observe that the rules for interpretation here given are but very rarely founded on experience; and that they rest almost entirely on analogies which are more or less vague, or upon popular traditions of unknown origin. These rules, furthermore, have been religiously handed down from antiquity, and our modern *Keys to Dreams* are in large measure transcripts of the rules found in the book of Artemidorus.

IV.

The data of literature and history are to be distinguished only with difficulty in this province; we shall essay, however, to adduce first the instances which lay no claim whatever to positive histor-

—Antiphon: Cicero, *De divinatione*, I., 20, 51; II., 70; Seneca, *Controv.*, 9; Tertul., *De an.*, 46; Diogenes Laertius, II., 46; Hermogenes, *De ideis*, II., 7; Lucianus, *Hist. ver.*, 2; Fulgentius, *Mytholog.*, I., 13.—Strato, *Diog. Laert.*, V., 59; Tert., *De an.*, 46.—Demetrius Phalereus: *Artem.*, II., 44.—Aristander Telmessius: Plinius, XVII., 38, 343; Plutarchus, *Alex.*, 2; Arrianus, *Anab.*, II., 18; Lucianus, *Philos.*, 21, 22; *Artem.*, I., 31; IV., 23.—Apollodorus Telmessius: *Artem.*, I., 79.—Philodorus: Tertul., *De an.*, 46.—Chrysippus: Cicero, *De div.*, II., 70; *Artem.*, IV., 65.—Antipater Tarsensis: Tert., *De an.*, 46; *Artem.*, II., 66.—Dionysius Rhodiensis: Tertul., *De an.*, 46; *Artem.*, II., 66.—Cratippus.—Alexander Myndius.—Nigidius Figulus: Io. Lyd, *De ostentatione*, 45.—Hermippus Beryensis: Tertul., *De an.*, 46.—Artemon Milesius: *Art.*, I., 2; II., 44; Fulg. Mythol., I., 13; Scholium Homeri *Iliadis*, XVI., 894.—Aristarchus: *Art.*, IV., 23.—Aristides: Aristides, *Orationes*, IV., V., VI.—Horus: Dio Chrysostomus, *Orat.*, XI.—Geminus Tyrius: *Art.*, II., 49.—Nicostrates Ephesius: *Art.*, I., 2.—Phœbus Antiochenus, *Art.*, I., 2; IV., 66.—Dio Cassius: Dio Cassius, LXXII., 23.—Serapion Ascalonius: Tertul., *De an.*, 46.—Philo Beryensis: *Histor. graec. fr.*, Ed. Didot, III., 35.—Pappus Alexandrinus; Suidas, Πάππος.

¹ Astrampsychos: *Oraculorum decades*, CIII. Ed. Hercher, 1863.—Synesius: Περὶ ἐνύπνιων (De insomniis).—Macrobius: *Commentarium in somn. Scipionis, Libri II.*—Meibomius: *De incubatione in fanis deorum medicinæ causa*.—Leopardi: *Saggio sopra gli errori popolari degli antichi*, Cap. V. *Dei sogni*. 1845.—Welcker: *Incubation, Rhetor Aristides; Kleine Schriften*, III., pp. 87, 114.—Büschenhenschutz: *Traum und Traumdeutung im Alterthum*. Berlin, 1868.

ical foundation; such as are found, for example, in the Homeric poems. Thus, Agamemnon sees in a dream the wife of Nestor who comes to speak and counsel with him. Nauticaa and Telemachus see Athena herself, and it is not the shade of Patroclus, but Patroclus himself, that appears to Achilles.¹ We may refer also to the dream of Penelope, who saw Ulysses himself in a dream on the eve of his return, and bitterly complained of being thus plagued by clear visions during her sleep.² The appearance of the gods themselves in visions was used by all the anthropomorphic religions as a ground for rejecting Christianity. Several celebrated cases furnished the foundation for this argument.

Onatus made his statue of Demeter black to accord with her phantom, which he had seen in a dream.³ Parrhasius did the same for his Heracles of Lindos.⁴ Æschylus recounts the dream of Atossa, the mother of Xerxes, which presaged the fateful reverses of her son in Greece.

Says Atossa :

" Since when my son departed with the army,
To bring destruction on Ionia, scarcely
One night hath been that did not bring me dreams ;
But yesternight, with figurement most clear,
I dreamt ; hear thou the theme. Methought I saw
Two women richly dight, in Persian robes
The one, the other in a Dorian dress,
Both tall above the vulgar stature, both
Of beauty blameless, and descended both
From the same race. The one on Hellas dwelt,
The other on fair Asia's continent.
Between these twain some strife there seemed to rise ;
Which when my son beheld, forthwith he seized them,
And joined them to his car, and made their necks
Submissive to the yoke. The one uptowered
In pride of harness, as rejoiced to follow

¹ *Iliad*, II., 5. *Odyssey*, VI., 13; XV., 10. *Iliad*, XXIII., 65.

² *Odyssey*, XX., 88.

³ *Pausanias*, VIII., 42, 7.

⁴ Athenæus, *Deipnosophistæ*, XII., 62. Ed. Meineke, 3 vol., Teubner, 1858.

The kingly rein. The other kicked and plunged,
And tossed the gear away, and broke the traces,
The yoke in sunder snapt, and from the car
Ran reinless. On the ground my son was thrown,
And to his aid Darius pitying came,
Whom when he saw, my Xerxes rent his robes."¹

Sophocles makes Chrysothemis recount the dream of Clytemnestra, who sees Egisthus menaced with death, and Chrysothemis sets forth the dream as follows :

"'Tis whisper'd, that she saw our father come
Again to light, and seem'd once more his wife :
That he took in his hand the regal scepter,
(Which once he bore, but now Ægysthus bears)
And fix'd it in the earth ; when strait there sprang
From it a thriving branch, which flourish'd wide,
And overshadow'd all Mycenæ's land."²

Aristophanes has Æschylus parody the monologue of Hecuba in Euripides, and speaks in this connexion of the hot baths which are recommended for counteracting the evil effects of portentous dreams. "Come, ye attendants, light me a lamp, and bring me dew from the rivers in pitchers, and warm some water, that I may wash away the divine dream."³

Plautus alludes to the Greek customs relative to medical suggestion by dreams in the temple of Æsculapius. Cappadox, a slave merchant, feeling ill after his interrogatory dreams in the temple of Æsculapius, explains to Palinurus, and afterward to his cook, that he had seen Æsculapius in his dream seated at a distance from him and unwilling to approach his presence. The cook answers that this is a sign that the god is not concerned about him and that he might better have lain in the temple of Jupiter.⁴

Literature has connected inventors with divination by dreams,

¹ Æschylus, *The Persians*, verses 226 et seq. *The Lyrical Dramas of Æschylus* from the Greek. Trans. into English verse by John Stuart Blackie, London, J. W. Parker, 1850.

² Sophocles, *Electra*, Eng. trans. by Theobald. London, John Bell, 1777.

³ Aristophanes, *Frogs*, verse 1340, Bohn's trans.

⁴ Plautus, *Curculio*, Act II., Scenes 1 and 2.

Æschylus having done so in the case of Prometheus,¹ Pliny in the case of Amphictyon,² and Pausanias in the case of Amphiaraus, the latter author having also spoken of a celebrated temple of incubation, namely that of Ino.³

Several authors, who, although they appeared late in the development of this species of literature, are on that account none the less interesting from the present point of view, strenuously combated the belief in the prophetic value of dreams. Theocritus, for example, treats the visions of dreams as unmitigated falsehoods. "Fatigued by the extraordinary exertions of the preceding day, his stomach empty, he dreams that he is seated on the banks of a river and is idly dangling his hook. Suddenly a fish of monstrous size seizes his bait. With line drawn taut and hands trembling with excitement, he endeavors to draw the fish to the shore without ever so much as once hoping for success. But the latter made no attempt to escape, and Osphalion drew upon the bank a fish of pure gold. Overcome with joy, he swore to abandon Neptune for Cybele, and to live the life of a king. Suddenly he awoke, terrified at the perjury he had committed, and then Olphis answered him:

' Nay, fear thee not at all.
Thou art not sworn, for thou hast not found true
The golden fish thou sawest, and the vision
Was but a lie. But if unslumbering
Thou search those waters, then perchance thy sleep
Hath augured luck. Go seek the fish of flesh,
Lest thou of hunger die and golden dreams.' "⁴

Ennius declares that he has little regard for interpreters and diviners, including prognosticators by dreams:

"I value at naught the augurs of the Marsian land, the haruspices of the villages, the astrologers of the market-place, the prognosticators of Isis, and the interpreters of dreams. They are but

¹ Æschylus, *Prometheus*, verse 485.

² The Elder Pliny. VII., 56, 203.

³ Pausanias, I., 34-35, and VII., 26.

⁴ Theocritus, *Idyll*, XXI., verses 63 to 67. English trans. by J. H. Hallard, London, 1894.

idlers, fools, and vagabonds, without either art or learning, and as superstitious as they are impudent; who, without knowing themselves the way, would seek to guide the footsteps of others."¹

Petronius is even more emphatic, and declares that the gods do not send the dreams, but that the dreamer creates them himself.²

History tells of many dreams that have been considered prophetic, but one may reasonably be astonished at their number being so few when one considers the great zeal with which the belief in their prophetic value has always been supported.

There is told first the dream of Hecuba, who, being *enceinte*, fancied she gave birth to a flaming torch which set the universe on fire: it was Paris, who was destined to kindle the war with Troy. Cicero attributes no higher value to this dream than that of a poetic legend, as he does likewise to the dream in which Æneas saw his entire future destiny.³

According to Justinus,⁴ Astyages, the grandfather of Cyrus, caused the latter to be exposed immediately after birth in an unprotected place, because he had dreamed that a vine had sprung forth from the womb of his daughter and had spread its branches over all Asia,—a dream which the diviners interpreted as a sign that he should be dethroned by a son of his daughter, as yet unmarried.

Herodotus relates that at the birth of his daughter Mandane, Astyages dreamed that she made so great a quantity of water as not only filled his capital Ecbatana, but overflowed all Asia. He

¹ Ennius cited by Cicero, *De divinatione*, I., 58.

"Non habeo denique nauci Marsum augurem,
Non vicanos aruspices, non de circo astrologos,
Non Isiacos conjectores, non interpretes somnium.
Non enim sunt ii arte divini, aut scientia,
Sed superstitionis vates, impudentesque hariolii,
Qui sibi semitam non sapiunt, alteri monstrant viam."

²"Somnia quae mentes ludunt volitantibus umbris; nec delubra deum, nec sub aethere numina mittunt, sed sibi quisque facit." Petronius, *Satyricon*, CIV. Ed. Panckoucke, 1835. II., p. 88.

³Cicero, *De divinatione*, Lib. I., xxi.

⁴ Justinus, Lib. I., Chapter 4.

placed the date of the dream of the vine in the first year of the marriage of Mandane with Cambyses.¹ Justinus also relates that Cyrus had a dream which confirmed him in his design to dethrone Astyages, but he does not report it in detail.²

Xenophon says not a word concerning these dreams in his *Cyropaedia*, but on the other hand he declares that shortly before his death Cyrus saw a majestic personage which said to him: "Prepare thyself, Cyrus, for thou shalt soon depart for the abode of the gods,"³ which is in flat contradiction with the story of Herodotus,⁴ according to which he saw Darius, the eldest son of Hytaspes, with two wings on his shoulders,—the one casting its shadow over Asia and the other over Europe; from which he inferred that the son of Hytaspes was plotting against him and would take the succession,—a prophecy which was fulfilled.

Xenophon relates two dreams to which he attributes prophetic value and which took place during the famous retreat of the ten thousand. In the first, which he dreamed at the moment the Greeks found themselves abandoned in Asia, "he fancied he saw in the midst of great thunder a lightning bolt fall upon his paternal house, which was set on fire."⁵ He did not know whether the bolt of Jupiter was a favorable sign or whether the blazing fire around him presaged that he would be imprisoned in Asia. In any event, the dream having awakened him, he called together his commanders and proposed to them to set out at once on their journey to the coast. Thus began the famous retreat of the ten thousand. In the second, "he dreamed that his feet were bound with fetters, which, having burst of their own accord, left him free to walk about as much as he wished."⁶ This dream, which he recounted to his commanders as a fortunate presage, preceded the difficult passage of the river Centrites, a feat which the Greeks accomplished successfully.

Lucian has spoken of the first of these dreams, which he con-

¹ Herodotus, Book I., 107.

² Justinus, Book I., Chapters 4 and 6.

³ Xenophon, Book VIII., Chapter 7.

⁴ Herodotus, Book I., 209.

⁵ *Anabasis*, Book III., Chapter 1.

⁶ *Anabasis*, Book IV., Chapter 3.

siders as nothing but a piece of artful strategy on the part of Xenophon, and compares it to one of his own which he has just related and which he had employed merely as a rhetorical device. He says:

"The vision of Xenophon was not that of a charlatan, and his narration was not an idle one. He was at war, his situation was critical, his enemies surrounded him on all sides, and his story was attended with the happiest results. In like manner, I have recounted my dream merely for the purpose of guiding young men toward the good and toward the love of science."¹

Herodotus recounts a series of dreams which preceded the expedition of Xerxes into Greece.

The king, who was determined upon this expedition, was earnestly dissuaded from the enterprise by his uncle, Artabanus. He was at first greatly put out by this interference, but gradually coming around to his uncle's point of view he was on the point of revoking his decision when he fell asleep. There then came to him in a dream, so the Persian accounts run, a tall and handsome man who upbraided him for so lightly abandoning his design. But on the following morning Xerxes, paying no attention to the dream, announced that after mature reflexion he had decided to follow the advice of his uncle, Artabanus. The following night he had another dream in which the same vision threatened him with the total demolition of his power if he persisted in his new resolution. Dismayed, Xerxes sent for Artabanus, explained to him the situation, and caused him to pass the night on his couch, clad in Xerxes's, own royal vestments, in order that the dream might come to Artabanus also; which would be a proof of its divine origin. And in fact, Artabanus did see the vision, who threatened to burn out his eyes with red hot irons if he persisted in dissuading the king from his original purpose. Artabanus thereupon also set to work actively promoting the expedition. Finally, after his resolution had been taken, Xerxes had a third dream. He imagined himself crowned with the branches of an olive-tree which covered the entire earth; afterwards, the crown which rested on his head van-

¹Lucian, *Dreams*, 17. French translation by Talbot, Paris, Hachette, 1847, T. I., p. 6.

ished. The magi presaged that he would have for his subjects all the men of the earth.¹

The genesis of these dreams is not difficult to establish. They are sufficiently explained by the desires and ambitions of Xerxes and the fears of Artabanus. In any event, the prophecy was an unfortunate one, since it led Xerxes to the historical disaster of Salamis. It might be said that the last vision could be interpreted as presaging this event, and that the magi wished to flatter Xerxes by their construction of it; but it is quite probable that the dream, if it was not invented after the fact, was at least so constructed as to be susceptible of an interpretation conforming to the real outcome.

Darius, as Quintus Curtius tells us, on the eve of his encounter with Alexander, had a dream which his diviners interpreted; but our author hesitates in giving his opinion as to the value to be attributed to the interpretation. "Greatly disturbed by the cares which were weighing upon him, the image of the approaching events pursued him even in his sleep; whether it be that his solicitude or some divining faculty of his mind summoned them before his vision."² In any event, he dreamed that the camp of Alexander was lighted up by flames, and that Alexander wore an ancient habit which he himself had once worn, and that having been conducted on horseback into Babylon, he suddenly disappeared from sight. The interpreters predicted either that Darius would surprise the camp of the king, who would take flight in a Persian garment, or that Alexander would achieve a signal triumph and become king in place of Darius. Darius accepted the first interpretation, which seemed to suit better with his wishes, and, marching against Alexander, suffered a disastrous defeat. The dream did not, and could not, presage falsely, since one of the interpretations was bound to come true. Darius had simply made an unfortunate choice.

According to Quintus Curtius, Alexander himself had a dream

¹ Herodotus, Book VII., Chapters 12-20.

² "Anxium de instantibus curis, agitabant etiam per somnum species imminentium rerum; sive illas aegritudo, sive divinatio animi praesagientis accersit."—Quintus Curtius, Lib. III., 3.

revealing the divine secrets of medicine. Resting in the chamber of his general, Ptolemæus, who had been seriously wounded and whom he loved very much, he fell into a deep sleep in which he saw "a dragon bringing to him in its jaw an herb which it offered as a remedy for Ptolemæus's sickness, assuring him that he would be able to recognise it. The herb was found and the wound was effectually healed."¹

At Rome, Tarquin had a dream, which was interpreted by the soothsayers as presaging the downfall of the kingly rule. Cicero cites it on the authority of Brutus Attii.²

Let us also cite the dream of Calpurnia, who saw her husband, Cæsar, lying murdered in her arms on the night preceding his assassination.³ Livy gives a different version of the dream.⁴ According to him, the gable of Cæsar's house fell in the dream of Calpurnia and aroused her fear. The story doubtless underwent many modifications and Alexander ab Alexandro relates that Cæsar himself is said to have "dreamed on the eve of his death that he was seated on the throne of Jupiter and had been hurled down from Heaven."⁵

There is still to be cited the phantom that appeared to Brutus at Philippi, where Brutus perished,⁶ and also the vision of Augustus at Philippi, where the latter dreamed that a friend had counseled him to abandon his tent, which was subsequently captured by the enemy. Augustus did as he was advised, and thus saved his life.⁷

Cicero gives a long list of prophetic dreams (*De divinatione*, I., 20–29):

That of the mother of Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, who dreamed that she had given birth to a satyr.

The dream of Hecuba already cited, together with that of Tarquin.

That of the mother of Phalaris, the cruel tyrant of Agrigen-

¹ Quintus Curtius, IX., 33.

² Cicero, *De divinatione*, I., 22.

³ Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar*, LXVIII.

⁴ Titus Livius, L. CXVI. Fragment. Ed. Didot, T. II., p. 902.

⁵ *Dies geniales*, L. III., Chapter 26. ⁶ Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar*, LXIV.

⁷ Suetonius, *Augustus*, XCI.

tum, who, according to Heraclides Ponticus, dreamed of blood at his birth.

That of Cyrus, who dreamed of three suns, which his sooth-sayers felicitously induced him to interpret as meaning that he would reign three times ten years.

That of Hannibal, who in a dream received a visit from Juno, who forbade him to remove a column of gold from her temple; and who, in another, dreamed of a devastating monster, which, according to Cælius, was his own impersonation.

That of Hamilcar who, at the siege of Syracuse, dreamed that he would dine in the city on the following day, which he did, but as a prisoner, having been captured in a sally by the besieged.

Socrates saw three days before his death the vision of a beautiful woman who told him that "on the third day he should reach fertile Phthia,"¹ and he then announced the day of his death to his friends.

Eudemus of Cyprus, according to Aristotle, dreamed of his recovery while sick.

Twice in succession Sophocles saw in a dream Hercules, who charged a thief with having abstracted from his temple a vessel of gold; whereupon Sophocles caused the arrest of the thief, who confessed his crime.

Curious is the dream of the Roman peasant, which appeared so portentous to the Senate of Rome that it ordered the celebration of certain interrupted public games to be repeated. "This is a fact," says Cicero, "upon which the two Fabii, the two Gellii, and more recently still the historian Cælius, are all of accord." During the celebration of the first great votive games, which took place in the time of the Latin war, the city was suddenly called to arms, and later the games were ordered to be repeated. Before they were begun, and just as the spectators had taken their seats, a slave carrying a furca, or fork-shaped criminal yoke, and writhing under the blows of a whip, was driven across the arena. Some time afterwards, a Roman peasant had a dream, in which there appeared a

¹ The verse is from Homer, *Iliad*, IX., 363 (Ed. Dindorf) and reads: ἦματι κε τριτάτῳ Θθίην ἐρίβωλον ικοῖμην. Cited in Plato. *Crito*, II.

person, who after declaring that the leader of the dance in the games had not pleased him, ordered him to go and make announcement of this fact to the Senate. The peasant, not daring to do so, had the same dream again, accompanied with the same injunction, this time with threats. Fear still holding him back, his son died. He then received the same command for the third time, and having finally been stricken with paralysis, he made known his dream to his friends who, placing him upon a litter, conveyed him into the presence of the Senate, whence, after having related his dream, he walked home without help. The Senate, being fully convinced of the truth of this dream, ordered a second celebration of the games.

Livy tells the same story, in almost precisely the same language, but in somewhat greater detail and with a slight difference as to the nature of the games.¹

The second of the Gracchi, according to Cælius, was forewarned by his brother that he would die the same death as the latter.

Simonides, according to his own testimony, was induced by the apparition of an unknown man whose abandoned body he had buried, to relinquish his intention to embark upon a certain vessel which was afterward wrecked. The poet, who had contemplated making a sea voyage, saw in a dream the person whom he had interred, beseeching him to abandon his project, informing him that if he persisted in embarking he would suffer shipwreck. Simonides altered his plans, and the vessel upon which he had intended to sail was lost.

Cicero, finally, narrates the dream of the two Arcadians, which we shall give later.

* * *

Valerius Maximus also gives a list of dreams, many of which have already been mentioned, and which are designed to establish the prophetic value of dreams.² We shall relate a few of them.

¹ Livy, Book II. 36. Also cited by Valerius Maximus, I. 7. IV., and by Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, II. 8.

² Valerius Maximus, *De somniis*, I., Chapter 7.

The first is of King Croesus. "This king had two sons; one of these, who excelled the other greatly in physical strength and beauty, and who was the heir to the throne, appeared to Croesus in a dream, transfixed by the point of a sword. In order to avoid the fulfilment of the dream, he enjoined his son who was devoted to warlike pursuits not to leave his palace. Now, it happened that a huge boar was ravaging the country of the Lydians and had killed numbers of the peasantry. Some representatives of the latter repaired to the king, imploring succor in their distress, and the king suffered his son to go forth in quest of the boar, saying that the animal carried no weapon of iron and his son did not fear his tusks. But what came to pass? A javelin hurled at the beast by one of the party struck the prince, and he died from the wound, thus fulfilling the paternal dream."¹

Next comes the dream of Caius Gracchus: "As he slept he dreamed that he saw his brother Tiberius, who told him that he would die in the same manner as he, Tiberius, had died. Caius was heard to tell this story several times even before he was elected to the office of tribune of the people, in which he met a fate similar to that of his elder brother."

The dream of the two Arcadians is the most celebrated of all. "Two friends of Arcadia, while journeying together, came to the city of Megara. One of them stayed with friends, and the other took lodgings in an inn. The first dreamed that the other, having been betrayed by his host, was beseeching him to come to his assistance, saying that if he would make haste it would be still possible to save him from the impending danger. After this vision, he arose and dressed himself, with the intention of proceeding to the inn in question. Then, in an ill-omened moment he repented of having been so unduly influenced by a dream, and came to the conclusion that it would be a futile undertaking to make his way in the dead of night to the place. He returned to his bed, and began to dream anew. He dreamed that his friend, who had in the meantime been put to death by the inn-keeper, was beseeching

¹ Also told by Herodotus, I., 53.

him now, not to save his life, which had been lost through his indifference, but to avenge his death, declaring that his murdered body was at that very moment being carried to the gates of the city in a cart laden with manure. The wretched man, thus besought by his friend, hurried to the gates of the city, and stopping the cart, which he had seen in his dream, he seized the murderer and led him away to the courts of justice, where the wretch was condemned to death."

The dream of Arterius Rufus is remarkable for its precision, which as a rule is rare: "Even a less interval of time separated this dream from the events which it presaged. Sojourning at Syracuse during the gladiatorial exhibitions, he saw in a dream a retiarius, or net-fighter, thrusting a sword into his bosom. On the following day, while witnessing the combat, he narrated his dream to the spectators seated beside him. Soon after, a retiarius and a swordsman entered the arena on the same side on which the Roman knight was seated. At this sight Rufus cried out: 'There is the retiarius by whom I dreamed I was assassinated'; and he prepared immediately to withdraw. But his neighbours succeeded in allaying his fears, and became thus indirectly responsible for the death of the unfortunate man. For the retiarius, having forced the swordsman to the wall, entangled him in his net, and in endeavoring to strike him after he had fallen, pierced with his weapon the bosom of Arterius, who died from the wound.'

On the other hand, the dream which is narrated of Alcibiades is very vague: "Alcibiades also, during his sleep, had a remarkably distinct premonition of the fate which awaited him. For the mantle of his mistress, with which he had covered himself when going to sleep, was made to do service as a shroud for his uninterred body."

The following is a list of the dreams cited by Valerius Maximus:

I. De Somniis Romanorum :

- (1) Artorii medici de Augusto; (2) Calpurniae de Caesare; (3) P. Decii, T. Manlii coss; (4) Ti. Attinii cujusdam; (5) M. Ciceronis exsulis; (6) C. Sempronii Gracchi; (7) Cassii Parmensis; (8) Alterii Rofi equitis romani.

II. *De Somniis externorum*:

- (1) Hannibal Poeni; (2) Alexandri magni regis; (3) Simonidis poetae; (4) Croesi Lydorum regis; (5) Cyri Persarum regis; (6) Himeræ mulieris de Dionysio; (7) Matris Dionysii tyranni; (8) Hamilcaris Poeni; (9) Alcibiadis Atheniensis; (10) Arcadis cujusdam.¹

Plutarch, who is the chronicler of legends *par excellence*, narrates many that have reference to prophetic dreams. The majority of them have already been cited. The remainder are traditions that have been orally preserved for a great length of time. Many of them possessed no prophetic value except that which superstition generously accorded to them. Take, for example, the dreams which troubled Pausanias because of his remorse for the murder of Cleonice.²

"It is related, that when Pausanias was at Byzantium, he cast his eyes upon a young virgin named Cleonice, of a noble family there, and insisted on having her for a mistress. The parents, intimidated by his power, were under the hard necessity of giving up their daughter. The young woman begged that the light might be taken out of his apartment, that she might go to his bed in secrecy and silence. When she entered he was asleep, and she unfortunately stumbled upon the candlestick, and threw it down. The noise waked him suddenly, and he, in his confusion, thinking it was an enemy coming to assassinate him, unsheathed a dagger that lay by him, and plunged it into the virgin's heart. After this he could never rest. Her image appeared to him every night, and, with a menacing tone, repeated this heroic verse,—

Go to the fate which pride and lust prepare!

Having been besieged in Byzantium, he found means to escape thence; and as he was still haunted by the spectre, he is said to have applied to a temple at Heraclea, where the *manes* of the dead were consulted. There he invoked the spirit of Cleonice, and entreated her pardon. She appeared, and told him,—'He would soon be delivered from all his troubles, after his return to Sparta,' in which, it seems, his death was enigmatically foretold."

It was almost a moral certainty that Pausanias would have been delivered from all his troubles after his return from Sparta, even if he had not died.

As for the dreams of Lucullus recorded in Plutarch, they possess nothing characteristic except lack of precision. The following is one of them: "On the same day, the goddess Proserpine ap-

¹ Valerius Maximus, *De somniis*, T. I., Cap. VII.

² Plutarch, *Life of Cimon*. Trans. by Langhorne. Vol. II., p. 401.

peared in a dream to Aristagoras the public secretary, and said : ‘Go and tell your fellow-citizens to take courage, for I shall bring the African piper against the trumpets of Pontus.’” On the following day, the besieged Cyzicenians saw the machines which had been erected against their walls broken to pieces by a violent wind from the south, which popular superstition naturally interpreted as the African piper.¹

At Sinope, Lucullus had a dream in which a person came to him and said : “Go forward, Lucullus, for Autolycus is coming to meet you.” The significance of the dream was revealed to him the same day when in pursuing the Cilicians to their ships he saw a statue lying on the shore which they had not been able to get on board. It was the statue of Autolycus himself, the founder of Sinope, and out of regard for the vision Lucullus restored their effects to the old inhabitants of the city and subsequently looked after their welfare.

On another occasion, he is said to have dreamed that Minerva appeared to him in a dream and revealed the presence of a large fleet of the enemy approaching. Her words were :

“Dost thou then sleep, great monarch of the woods,
When fawns are rustling near thee ?”

It will be evident that there is not much to be gained from a study of this class of dreams.²

Finally, we find a number of prophetic dreams mentioned in Appian : Didonis,³ Cæsaris de colonia carthaginienti,⁴ Matris Se-leuci,⁵ Antigoni,⁶ Mithridates de Latonae luco,⁷ Luculli,⁸ Syllae de

¹ Plutarch, *Life of Lucullus*. Langhorne, Vol. II., p. 427.

² The following is a list of Plutarch's dreams, the references being to Didot : Agesilai Aulide, *Vite*, T. II., p. 714, l. 12 ; Alcibiadis ante necem. I., p. 254, l. 52 ; Alexandri magni de Clito, II., 827, 25 ; Antigoni, II., 1063, 6 ; Antonii, II., 1100, 50 ; Arimnesti, I., 388, 46 ; M. Artorii, II., 1196, 5 ; Caesaris ad Ariminum, II., 863, 26 ; Calpurniae, II., 880, 23 ; Ciceronis de Octavio, II., 1053, 54 ; Cimonis, I., 585, 40 ; Cinnæ, II., 883, 26 (1184, 15) ; Cyziceni scribæ, I., 594, 45 ; Darii regis, II., 804, 40 ; Demetrii, II., 1077, 1.

³ Appian. *De rebus punicis* 1.

⁴ Appian. *De rebus punicis* 136.

⁵ Appian. *De rebus syriacis* 56.

⁶ Appian. *De bello mythridatico* 9.

⁷ Appian. *De bello mythridatico* 27.

⁸ Appian. *De bello mythridatico* 83.

instante morte,¹ Pompei de templo veneri victrici dicando,² Calpurniae de morte Cæsaris,³ Octaviani de cavendis castris,⁴ Elyssis.⁵

Later historians also relate dreams of this character. Thus, Ælius Lampridius says of the dream of Alexander Severus: "His mother dreamed on the eve of her marriage that she gave birth to a purple-colored dragon. The same night, his father dreamed that he had been carried aloft to Heaven upon the wings of the goddess of Victory, which occupied a place in the Roman senate-chamber."⁶

Zosimus cites one of the emperor Julian: "Whilst he was revolving these thoughts in his mind and was loath to begin a civil war, the gods revealed to him in a dream what should happen by showing him at Vienna, where he then chanced to be, the sun, which pointed to the other stars and recited to him the following verses:

'When beneath Aquarius, Jupiter shall stand,
When below the Virgin old Saturn shall shine,
Whose looks morose his surly temper brand,
Then shall the tomb open with speed for Constantine.'

"Giving no thought to this dream, he continued, as he was wont, to administer the public affairs."⁷

According to Herodianus, Antoninus Caracalla "repaired to Pergamus to try the remedies of Æsculapius, and passed a night in his temple as was the custom."⁸ But the historian omits to say whether he recovered.

Finally, there is a legend connected with the founding of the city of Marseilles, containing a revelatory dream of a divine character:

"After the settlement of the coasts of Gaul by mariners from Phocæa, messengers were sent back to their native city. Before returning again to Gaul, they

¹ Appian. *De bellis civil.* I., 105.

² Appian. *De bello mythridatico* II., 69.

³ Appian. *De bello mythridatico* II., 115.

⁴ Appian. *De bello mythridatico* IV., 110.

⁵ Appian. *De bello mythridatico* V., 116.

⁶ Ælius Lampridius, *Alexandri Severi vita.* Ed. Nisard, 1846, p. 451.

⁷ Zosimus, Ed. Glisard, p. 791.

⁸ Herodianus, Lib. IV.

rested in Ephesus, where a woman announced to them that Diana, the great goddess of the Ephesians, had directed her in a dream to transport one of her statues to Gaul and to introduce her worship there,—a command which was carried out at the founding of the city of Massilia.”¹

It happened that subsequently Minerva, who also had an altar in the new city, gave protection to Massilia by threatening in a dream the king Catumand, who was besieging it at the head of an army. She appeared to him in terrible aspect and said in an angry voice: “I am a goddess, and I will protect this city.” The frightened king concluded peace. In the city he afterwards recognised the statue of the goddess who had appeared to him in his dream, and he placed about her neck a collar of gold.²

In all these dreams, a very considerable portion is to be ascribed to legends made out of whole cloth, or at least greatly embellished, and a convincing proof of this is discoverable in the fact that with different authors, widely different versions of the same event are found.

The number of such dreams is quite limited, and their value is not great. Nevertheless, there is among many of them a certain similarity, this being especially so of the dreams of pregnant women respecting the destinies of their children; and where is there a mother who has not dreamed on this subject? Take for example the dream of the mother of Octavius, who, according to Alexander ab Alexandro, dreamed, while *enceinte*, that her intestines had fallen out and rolled over the entire world.³

Then, there are the dreams of victory or of death, which but re-echo the intensely real feelings of waking life, as did the dream of Gracchus, for example. Finally, in some cases, the dream itself has been a potent factor in determining the event it predicted.

There are also instances of dreams that are clearly prophetic, yet even here the agreement with reality does not appear extraordinary, when it is remembered that we have in this class abso-

¹ Strabo, I., 4, p. 179. Cf. A. Thierry, *Histoire des Gaulois*, 1862, T. I., pp. 138–139.

² Justinus, I., XLIII. c. 5. Cf. A. Thierry, *Histoire des Gaulois*, 1862. T. I., pp. 528–529.

³ Alexander ab Alexandro, Book III.

lutely all the cases of coincidence which nations who believed in the prophetic value of dreams have been able to produce. And as for the literature of Greek and Roman antiquity on this subject, which at a distance seems so extensive, it is found on close scrutiny to be extremely meagre. What it appears to give in the sum-total is the impression of a unanimous and deep-seated confidence in the ancient heart respecting the prophetic value of dreams, from the thrall of which few men were able to escape. And it is not only the literature of antiquity with its fictions that exhibits this symptom; it is also, and notably so, the history of antiquity. Indeed, the history of the ancients itself is largely literature and fiction, and Herodotus does not differ greatly from Homer.

V.

If we examine the opinions entertained by the philosophers and physicians of antiquity upon this subject, it will be found that in general they appear to corroborate the popular beliefs.

Democritus, despite his system, was a believer in the prophetic value of dreams; according to him, it is possible for the images which haunt us in our sleep to reflect the states of the soul and the intentions of other people and so to reveal the future. We have here a species of telepathic revelation of the future. He makes one reservation to the effect that possible changes in the images of our dreams may prevent our assigning to them an absolute value.¹

We do not know the views of Pythagoras. He thoroughly studied divination by dreams among the Egyptians, the Arabs, the Chaldæans, and the Hebrews; he took great interest in the magic of Egypt, where he spent twenty-two years, but it was not for the sake of their superstitions.² His disciples relate that their master sometimes conversed in his sleep with dead relatives, but he personally attributed no great significance to this fact.³

¹ Plutarch, *Quæst. conviv.* VIII., 10, 2; *Placita philos.* V., 2; Aristotle, *De div.* 2. 464a; Cicero, *De div.* I., 3. 5; Zeller, *Philosophie des Grecs*, French translation by Boutroux, Vol. II., p. 354.

² καὶ οὐχὶ δεισιδαιμονίας ἔνεκα.—Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, III., 14, IV., 18. 19.

³ Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, 139, 148.

Diogenes rises above the common superstitions, and declares that although he entertained a high opinion of man when he contemplated the great thinkers, yet when he saw the interpreters of dreams, the soothsayers and their credulous patrons, he looked upon man as the most stupid of creatures.¹

But, the following is the view of Hippocrates, which his disciple, Galen, has repeated word for word :²

" Among dreams, those which are of divine origin and presage either to cities or individuals fortunate or unfortunate events not incurred by the fault of the parties concerned, have their interpreters who are able to assign to them an exact meaning. There are also dreams in which the soul announces corporeal affections, be it excess of fulness or the evacuation of congenital things, or be it a change toward unaccustomed things, and these are explained by the same interpreters, who are sometimes deceived and who sometimes predict correctly, without knowing why they sometimes succeed and why they sometimes fail."

This is the work of a physician. Hippocrates also appears to have possessed a rather fantastic sort of symptomatology. Thus, to see the moon, the sun, or the stars, was a sign of health; but if a star disappeared, particularly during a rain, this circumstance called for accurate and rigorous treatment, which varied according to whether the star that appeared was the sun, or the moon, etc.

The great philosophers held the same views with the great physicians. Plato remarks, in the ninth book of *The Republic*, that the dreams of virtuous men differed from the dreams of profligate men, and that accordingly dreams partook of the character of the individual. He was particularly firm in his faith in the prophetic value of dreams. The following is a specimen from the *Timaeus*:³

" And herein is a proof that God has given the art of divination not to the wisdom, but to the foolishness, of man. No man, when in his wits, attains prophetic

¹ Diogenes Laertius, VI. 2. 4.

² Οκόσα μὲν οὖν τῶν ἐντπνῶν θεῖά ἔστι, καὶ προσημαίνει τινὰ συμβούμενα, ἡ πόλεσαι, ἡ τῷ ἴδιῳ λαῷ, ἡ κακά ἡ ἀγαθά μὴ δι' αἰτῶν ἀμαρτίην, εἰσὶν οἱ κρίνοντος περι τῶν τοιούτων ἀκριβῆ τέχνην ἔχοντες· ὁκόσα δέ ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ σώματος παθήματα προσημαίνει πλησμονῆς ἡ κενώσιος ὑπερβολὴν τῶν ἔνμφτων, ἡ μεταβολὴν τῶν ἀηθέων, κρίνοντος μὲν καὶ ταῦτα, καὶ τὰ μὲν τυγχάνοντος, τὰ δὲ ἀμαρτάνοντος, καὶ οὐδέτερα τούτων γνώσκονται, διοτι γένεται, οὐθὲ διτὶ ἀν ἐπιτίχωσιν, οὐθὲ διτὶ ἀν ἀμάρτωσι.—Hippocrates, *On Dreams*. Complete works, Ed. Littré. Baillièrè, Paris, 1881. Vol. VI., pp. 640-663.

³ Dialogues of Plato, Jowett's translation, Vol. III., p. 493.

truth and inspiration; but when he receives the inspired word, either his intelligence is enthralled in sleep, or he is demented by some distemper or possession."

In the preceding views, Plato followed the teachings of his master Socrates, as he has expounded them in the *Republic* and as they are confirmed by Xenophon in the *Cyropaedia*. The following is the passage from Plato:¹

"When a man's pulse is healthy and temperate, and when before going to sleep he has awakened his rational powers, and fed them on noble thoughts and inquiries, collecting himself in meditation; after having first indulged his appetites neither too much nor too little, but just enough to lay them to sleep, and prevent them and their enjoyments and pains from interfering with the higher principle—which he leaves in the solitude of pure abstraction, free to contemplate and aspire to the knowledge of the unknown, whether in past, present, or future; when again he has allayed the passionate element, if he has a quarrel against any one,—I say, when, after pacifying the two irrational principles, he rouses up the third, which is reason, before he takes his rest, then, as you know, he attains truth most nearly, and is least likely to be the sport of fantastic and lawless visions."

The passage from Xenophon² reads as follows:

"You have remarked that nothing more resembles death than sleep, and it is in sleep that the soul of man is most divine. It even has dim presentiments of what takes place in the future, for in this state it possesses in fullest measure its liberty."

Like Plato, Aristotle also refers to the dreams of good people, which relate only to excellent things, being the echo of the thoughts which have occupied their minds before going to sleep. He says:

"The best Greeks have the best dreams, for the reason that their thoughts are occupied exclusively with excellent things during their waking hours. Those who have less excellent thoughts or less sound bodies have less excellent and less sound dreams; for the condition of the body contributes greatly to the images which appear to us in our dreams."³

Aristotle has been ranked among the partisans of prophetic dreams as well as among their adversaries,⁴ and in point of fact his

¹ Plato, *Republic*, Jowett's translation, Vol. III., pp. 280-281.

² Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, VIII., 7, 319.

³ Aristotle, *Problems*, French translation of Barthélémy-Saint-Hilaire, Paris, Hachette, 1891, Section XXX., paragraph 14, p. 345.

⁴ Gassendi, *Phys. Lect.*, III., p. 423.

texts are nothing less than ambiguous on the subject. Aristotle admits that dreams may predetermine events by the knowledge which they furnish of them, also that divination may be successfully practised, though without seeing anything preternatural in these possibilities. "It is not inconsistent with reason," he says, "that the images which appear in dreams should be the cause of certain definite acts. Just as those who ought to do, who are wont to do, or who have frequently done, some certain thing, think of it day and night in dream-fashion, as it were, (for the occupations of the day prepare the way in a measure for such a movement of the thought), so, conversely, the majority of the movements which are executed in sleep become the determining principle of our actions during the day; for our train of thought has been checked at this point and has by the representations of the night prepared the way for the execution of the act. It is thus that certain dreams are causes or signs. But in the majority of cases the coincidences are fortuitous only, this being especially so in the case of those extraordinary dreams which exceed the bounds of human credibility; and all those which thus take place in us have for their subject-matter some such object as a naval battle, for example, or some other event which is not in any wise connected with our life."¹

Let us not pass over this first indication of a higher and more accurate point of view, without observing that on this subject Aristotle differed completely from his master, Plato, and was the inaugurator of an entirely new idea.

We revert to the common belief with Herophilus, a physician of Ptolemy, who distinguished three species of dreams: the θεό-

¹ Αλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἐνιά γε τῶν καθ' ὑπνον φαντασμάτων αἴτια, εἰναι τῶν οίκειων ἐκάστῳ πράξεων οὐκ ἀλογον· ὃσπερ γὰρ μέλλοντες πράττειν, καὶ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν ὄντες, ἢ πεπραχότες πόλλακις εἰδονειρὰ τούτους σύνεσμεν καὶ πράττομεν (αἴτιον δ' ὅτι, πρωδοποιημένη τυγχάνει ἡ κίνησις ἀπὸ τῶν μεθ' ἡμέραν ἀρχῶν) οὐτω πάλιν ἀναγκαῖον καὶ τὰς καθ' ὑπνον κινήσεις πολλάκις ἀρχὴν εἰναι τῶν μεθ' ἡμέραν πράξεων διὰ τὸ πρωδοποιῆσθαι πάλιν καὶ τούτων τὴν διάνοιαν ἐν τοῖς φαντάζμασι τοῖς νυκτερινοῖς. Οὐτω μὲν οὖν ἐνδέχεται τῶν ἐνυπνίων ἐνια καὶ σημεῖα καὶ αἴτια εἰναι τὰ δὲ πολλὰ συμπάντας ἔσικε, μάλιστα δὲ τὰ θ' ὑπερβατὰ πάντα, καὶ δῶν μὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἡ ἀρχὴ, ἀλλὰ περὶ ναυμαχίας, καὶ τῶν πόρρω συμβανόντων ἐστίν.—Aristotle, *On Divination by Dreams*; Waddington, *La psychologie d'Aristote*, Paris, Joubert, 1848, chapter xiii., page 607.

πνευστοι, or those sent by God, the *φυσικοι*, or those created by the soul, and the *συγκραματικοι*, or mixed species.¹

The philosopher Priscian, who flourished in the time of Justinian, also essayed an explanation. He found that the soul, being free during sleep from the bonds of the body, became stronger, more lucid, and more apt to entertain the divine visions which permitted it to prophesy and to predict the future. He propounds the following questions :

" If our soul is able to predict the future, why is it that it acquires this power over future events only in the periods when it is unconscious ? What is the reason that certain people are able to make prophecies ? Why is it that the knowledge which the soul has of future events during its waking hours does not possess the same certainty ? And why is prophecy impossible in these hours ? "

His answer is as follows :

" The mind, when freed from the body during dreams, may be judged by God worthy of the visions which he sends it,—a fact which was overlooked by Aristotle and by all his followers. The soul receives from God faculties which it possesses to the full. Thus, the soul, being purified and without corporeal dreams, receives intellectual revelations, and, by a sort of divine operation, as it were, predicts the future."²

Finally, according to Philo the Jew, there are, as Chaignet remarks, three sorts of dreams : The passive, or those invoked by God ; the active, or spontaneous, where the soul is merged with the mind of the All and can predict the future ; and the mixed dreams, where the soul is abandoned to a delirious enthusiasm, and prophesies in that state.³ Philo says :

¹ Plutarch, *Placita phil.*, V., 2.

² " Si enim notitia animæ est, quare in tempore velut ignorantia et insensibilitatis dum sit ipsa, circa ea quæ futura sunt fortior et potentior est; unde et prophetias quasdam dicunt quidam; invigilando vero ipsa animæ notitia circa futura eandem firmitatem non habet, neque prophetat? . . . Si igitur segregatur corpore in somnis, digna fieri potest deo missis visionibus (et nunquid hoc videtur Aristoteli et quibusdam ex illius schola), et a deo missas operationes et virtutes accipit, quas pulcre habet et facile commixta intellectualibus. Unde et sine somnis anima corporalibus purgata intellectuales habet receptiones et cum divina quadam operatione prævidet futurum."—Priscian, *Scriptorum Graecorum Bibliotheca* (*Plotinus, Porphyrius, Proclus, and Priscianus*), Ed. Didot. Paris, 1855. Pp., 563 and 566.

³ Chaignet, *Psychologie des Grecs*. III., page 459, note. Philo, *De somniis*, fragment from Josephus, Vol. II., page 667.

"In the treatise which precedes the present,¹ we spoke of dreams sent from heaven which are classed under the first species; in reference to which subject we delivered our opinion that the Deity sent the appearances which are beheld by man in dreams in accordance with the suggestions of his own nature.

"Now the second species is that in which our mind, being moved simultaneously with the mind of the universe, has appeared to be hurried away by itself and to be under the influence of divine impulses, so as to be rendered capable of comprehending beforehand and knowing by anticipation, some of the events of the future. . . . In describing the third species of dreams which are sent from God, we very naturally call on Moses as an ally, in order that as he learnt, having previously been ignorant, so he may instruct us who are also ignorant, concerning these signs, illustrating each separate one of them."²

There were few philosophers among the Romans, and these were not remarkable for their originality. Cicero³ was but a populariser of Greek thought, and he limits his remarks mainly to a discussion of the Stoic belief in the prophetic value of dreams. Like Aristotle, by whom he was doubtless influenced, he finds it absurd that the gods should be at pains to give us the power to foresee the future during the night, and not during the day. He holds that it is impossible to distinguish true and divine dreams from those which are false and human. The obscure interpretations of the divine dreams appear to him to have not the slightest connexion with the dreams themselves. Why does dreaming of eggs, for example, presage the discovery of great treasures? Do not numbers of people dream of eggs without ever finding riches? And as for dreams that are less dubitable, it is probable that many of them are inventions, and hence not amenable to criticism.

¹ The treatise referred to has not been preserved.

² Η μὲν οὖν πρὸ ταῦτης γραφὴ περιεῖχε τῶν κατὰ τὸ πρῶτον εἶδος ταπτομένους τῶν ὄντων θεοπέμπτων, ἐφ' οὐ τὸ θεῖον ἐλέγομεν κατὰ τὴν ἴδιαν ὑποβολὴν τας ἐν τοῖς ὅπνοις ἐπιπέρπετων φανασίας.

Δεύτερον δὲ εἶδος ἐν ψ ὁ ἡμέτερος νοῦς τῷ τῶν ὅλων συγκινούμενος ἐξ ἔντοῦ κατέχεσθαι τε καὶ θεοφορεῖσθαι ἐδόκει, ὡς ίκανὸς εἶναι προλαμβάνειν καὶ προγινώσκειν τι τῶν μελλόντων.

Τὸ τρίτον εἶδος τῶν θεοπέμπτων ὄντων ἀναγράφοντες εἰκότως ἀν ἐπίμαχον Μωάσῆν καλοῦμεν, ἵνα, ὡς ἐμαθεν οὐκ εἶδως, ἀγνοοῦντας καὶ γῆμάς ἀναδιδάξῃ περὶ τῶν σημείων ἔκαστον αἰγάλων.—Philo Judæus, *Complete Works*, Leipsic, 1851. T. III. περὶ τοῦ θεοπέμπτου εἶναι τοὺς ὄντες.

³ *De divinatione*, Lib. II., 60-72.

Dreams are naught but the revivification of former sensory images, and their necessary and natural movement is in no wise connected with divination. Finally, the subtleties of the interpreters are expressly devised for the purpose of engaging assent, and accordingly there can be nothing like an experimental foundation for their superstitious science.

Lucretius assumes a similar attitude. Dreams for him are but the reappearance during sleep of the images which have occupied our thoughts during the day, and in confirmation of his theory he cites numerous examples. He says:

"The occupations which have principally held our attention during the day, those to which we have devoted ourselves with the greatest zeal, those to which the soul has applied itself with the greatest ardor, reappear in our sleep, and we abandon ourselves to them again, in that state."¹

From Lucretius we may conclude what was the attitude of Epicurus toward this question.

* * *

Having reached the goal of our investigations, let us cast back a glance over the results which we have obtained, and endeavor to draw from them some of the conclusions which they contain. In so doing, we are immediately impressed by the fact that the origin of the belief in the prophetic value of dreams in Greek and Roman antiquity is lost in traditions which antedate the legends of Homer themselves; is prior, that is to say, to the invention of writing and to the origin of civilisation; and that, on the other hand, this belief was perpetuated throughout the ages down to the time of the decadence of the Roman empire, and that afterwards, by the mingling of the pagan myths with the traditions of Christianity, this belief was handed down to the civilisations of our own day. Philo the Jew stood at the confluence of these two currents of thought,—the current which emanated from the old Greek philosophers and that which came from the renovators of Judaism; and it is with the

¹ "Et quo quisque fere studio devinctus adhæret,
Aut quibus in rebus multum sumus ante morati
Atque in eo ratione fuit contenta magis mens,
In somnis eadem plerumque videmur obire."

—Lucretius, *De Natura Rerum*, Book IV., 962-966.

spirit of a philosopher impregnated with the ideas of Plato that Philo speaks of the Bible and of prophetic dreams.

If we examine the foundations of the belief of the ancients, we shall see that the facts, far from corroborating the belief, owe to the belief whatever validity they possess. In the sequel, they lent some re-enforcement to the belief, but at the origin the belief was far too strong to need their support. For minds who are already absolutely convinced, there is no necessity of proof, and demonstration can come only with criticism. One cannot, in fact, interpret the faith of the ancients in this regard as a proof that they had adequate grounds for accepting it.

The facts that we have related may still possess a value for persons who are antecedently convinced of the certainty of stories of this character, the falsity of which one can never prove. But a critical mind can attribute to them no value, for the reason that they can never be regarded as established. It is not permissible to invoke a new principle of explanation in nature, save when all other principles have failed; and in the present case certainly, embellished coincidences and legends which have afterwards crystallised about great historical events, do not appear to demand a supernatural intervention.

As for the ancients, on the other hand, their habits of mind naturally led them to regard the prophetic interpretation of dreams as a matter of course. But the less ground there was for the existence of this habit of mind, the greater the power it evinced. And having committed themselves to the most exaggerated imaginable symbolism, the ancients preferred accepting the mistakes made in the interpretation of dreams which were not realised, (and this was the general rule,) to renouncing their faith in the prophetic value of dreams, absolutely unfounded though this faith may have been. We are not, accordingly, justified in asserting that the origin of the belief in the prophetic value of dreams was based upon well-established instances of the realisation of dreams in some certain cases. The facts are subsequent to the belief, indeed were evoked by the belief, and acquired no significance until the belief was subjected to criticism and forced to seek its justification.

But if the belief was not based on reason from the start, why was it that those who made use of their reasoning powers failed to reject it? The reason is that the ancients, in all their thinking and philosophising, never followed the principle of the Cartesian doubt, never made a *tabula rasa* of their traditions and beliefs, never endeavored to erect structures of thought on foundations more solid and enduring than those already obtaining. They built with the data that had been handed down to them through each succeeding age, and devoted their energies rather to vindicating than to verifying their beliefs and superstitions. Hippocrates did good scientific work in the field of medicine, but he never attempted to extricate himself from the ideas of his environment. Outside the domain of medicine he remained a Greek, and as such was as much under the influence of their traditions as their laws. Even Cicero, who like Aristotle also took a determined and rational stand against the superstitious doctrines of the diviners and augurs, frequently gave evidence of sharing the common belief on this point. And possibly he actually did share it. For by vigorous critical effort and by enforced lucidity of thought one can escape momentarily from the thrall of superstitions that assert themselves in powerful and exaggerated form, while one is utterly unable to do so when they attack the mind silently and unawares. There is accordingly no ground for astonishment that among so many eminent thinkers there should have been only a few who, by the exercise of critical judgment and good sense, rejected the belief in the prophetic value of dreams; and, startling as the paradox may seem at first blush, that in Greek and Roman antiquity there exist neither facts sufficient to justify the prevalent belief in the prophetic value of dreams nor minds powerful enough to completely free themselves from this belief, it has nevertheless a claim on our indulgence.

N. VASCHIDE.

H. PRÉRON.

PARIS.